

Record

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Lottie offering sets record, misses goal

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Southern Baptists set another record in giving to the 2002 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, the International Mission Board (IMB) announced June 5.

Southern Baptist churches gave \$115,015,216 to the offering, an increase of \$1.3 million (1.15%) over 2001. However, the offering fell short of the \$125 million goal, complicating a financial situation already stressed by declining investment income and a rapidly increasing missionary force.

As a result, IMB will be forced to move ahead with plans to restrict the number of new missionaries appointed.

"We are grateful that Southern Baptists have a heart for missions and continue to give so faithfully and generously to the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering," IMB President Jerry Rankin said. "Southern Baptists continue to set new records for giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, as well as through Cooperative Program Missions, which is the foundation of cooperative support for our convention to fulfill the Great Commission."

"Because of the amazing growth in missionary personnel and unprecedented new opportunities all over the world, however, all of the \$125 million goal was included in the operating budget. As a result, we are having to restrict the approval of available missionary candidates for the first time since the Depression years of the 1930s."

In each of the past two years, the International Mission Board has sent out more than 1,000 new missionaries — a sharp upturn in an already extraordinary growth curve for the entity, Rankin said.

"It took 14 years for the IMB to grow from 3,000 to 4,000 missionaries under appointment, but only seven years to grow from 4,000 to 5,000," he said. "The past two years have taken the board halfway to another thousand with 5,545 fully support-



AHEAD IN THE RACE — Southern Baptist missionaries often find themselves playing catch-up with already-established religions where they serve. In this photograph, a Muslim teacher holds forth in one of the Arab world's al-Azhar Mosque schools. Thousands of aspiring Muslim imams, teachers, and missionaries come from Sudan, Afghanistan, Turkey, and many other countries attend the schools to study Islamic law, theology, and evangelism. (BP photo by Roy M. Burroughs)

ed workers serving among 1,497 people groups worldwide.

While the board's missionary count grew 8.7% from 2000 to 2002, combined income from the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon offering increased 1.5%.

Every dollar given to the offering is used exclusively for missionaries and their ministries. None of it is spent on stateside administration or promotion. The offering is named after the venerable 19th-century missionary who gave her life taking the Gospel to the people of China.

In addition to budget cuts announced in May, board leaders will limit the number of new workers being sent overseas by deferring appointments and putting candidates on hold, said Lloyd Atkinson, IMB vice president for missionary personnel.

"About 100 candidates who hoped to begin their missionary careers this year have been deferred to next year or put on hold," Atkinson said. "That is a tremendous disappointment to them personally, as well as to missionaries on the field who hoped these urgent strategic needs would be filled."

WHAT'S IN THE RECORD

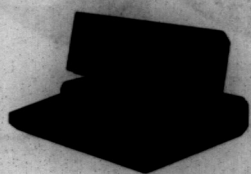
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The power of fatherhood

His father was a drunk, a mean drunk. When the young boy thought he was old enough and big enough to save his mother, he stepped between his parents during one of his father's alcoholic rages. He wasn't old enough or big enough, and his father beat him into a coma. Many more beatings would follow.

The father eventually died from his excesses, but not before his son learned to internalize his own rage and blot out any feelings he had for anyone. He failed at school and virtually everything he tried to do for a living, until he came upon the ideal path to power, prestige, and vindication for his early life of helplessness and humiliation before his father. "Close your eyes to pity! Act brutally!" he exhorted his followers, and they obeyed.

History records his name as Adolf Hitler.

Another little boy, not so far away, learned to dread the unsteady sound of his father's boots on the steps of their ramshackle home because he knew his father had been doing what he did nearly every evening — searching out and consuming all the alcohol he could beg, borrow, or steal. He knew his father meant to beat everyone in the family, and there was nowhere to hide in the tiny shack.

With every beating, he became more sullen. His father once beat him so severely that he urinated blood for weeks. He learned not to care for anyone, and to consider such feelings as weakness. He studied to become a priest, but his childhood had made him pitiless and bitter. He even discarded his family surname in favor of a word that means "man of steel" in his native language.

History records the adopted name as Joseph Stalin.

Is it coincidence that the two greatest monsters of the twentieth century, responsible for the deaths of tens of millions of innocent people, have poor fathers in common? Hardly.

In a twisted way, Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin are poster children for the indisputable importance of fathers in the lives of their children. Obviously, most children with violent fathers don't grow up to slaughter tens of millions of innocent people, but we know from experience that it only takes one or two such people to set an entire generation aflame.

It would be much easier to write a sentimental column on the occasion of Fathers Day, recalling and commending the fathers of yesteryear who served their families and sacrificed for them in ways modern generations of detached, materialistic Americans can hardly believe. Once there were uncountable numbers of such men, but now the ranks are thin. It would be much easier to write about them, but that is not the state of fatherhood today.

Today there are too many fathers who are too absent, too distant, too self-absorbed, or too disinterested. Too many of us have traded the love of one woman for life, and our awesome power to procreate, for the empty pleasures of a dissipative existence. Too many of us drink. Too many of us gamble. Too many of us are violent. Too many of us drive the mothers of our unborn children to the abortion clinics.

Studies show that Christians are often part of the problem. Our divorce rate is virtually the same as the general population. Our churches are filled with children whose fathers have little contact with them. Our churches are filled with leaders who aren't home enough to lead their own families. We are captivated by the allure of the golf course,

"BUT DAD, YOU SAID IN YOUR SERMON HOW JESUS TOOK HIS FRIENDS FISHING. WHY CAN'T YOU BE MORE LIKE JESUS?"



the tennis court, the cable sports channel, the job. We're not all that different from the heathen when it comes to raising our children.

We should be different, and the difference should be obvious to everyone. Our Lord loved and nurtured children; we can do no less and still call ourselves His followers. It's past time we returned to the proper examples of biblical fatherhood and started acting like the Christians we profess to be. Our children deserve it. Our children's mothers deserve it.

Our Savior deserves it.

Sources: *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *World Book Encyclopedia*, and *The History Channel*.

GUEST OPINION:

Why all the injuries at abortion clinics?

By Pat Cartrette, Exec. Director
Jackson Right to Life



The State of Mississippi's budget and the expected \$91 million Medicaid deficit for the next fiscal year is a hot topic among state officials. I don't have a plan for dealing with the entire \$91 million, but I do have a suggestion for dealing with approximately two million dollars of Medicaid spending: find out why so many women are injured at the state's two abortion clinics in Jackson.

In the five and a half years for which we have data (it's difficult to get the information from the Department of Medicaid), \$1.9 million was billed to Medicaid to treat women injured by abortion. This number may increase another million dollars or more when data for the remainder of 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001 are received. These dollars do not include complications treated and funded by private payors.

Why are so many women injured? Unlike most surgical procedures that are performed on patients who are ill and having problems, abortions are performed upon young, healthy women. Why all the complica-

tions? This situation cries out for an investigation into conditions at clinics from which so many patients (670 women) have been hospitalized after so-called "safe, legal" abortions.

Both Jackson abortion clinics have Mississippi State Department of Health documented violations of Mississippi laws that were designed to protect women, but neither clinic has been fined for these violations.

One clinic had numerous citations for not having a physician present to counsel the women before abortion — a clear violation of Mississippi law. They were using a photocopy of a document signed by the abortionist

who was not present at the time of consent and was likely not even in the state of Mississippi at the time of the "counseling" which was performed by staff.

At this same clinic we have watched as eight to ten women enter the clinic for required counseling. After they have all gathered, a local physician arrives and then leaves after five minutes. This passes for "counseling" — one physician, eight to ten women — and is certainly a violation of the intent of the informed consent law.

A clinic was cited when 12 of 14 employees were without current TB skin tests on file. Patient records failed to contain

pregnancy tests or pre-op nursing notes. Findings revealed that a clinic failed to secure and monitor controlled drugs.

Right to Life of Jackson has made repeated written requests to the Mississippi Attorney General and the Mississippi State Department of Health, asking that the violations be dealt with as allowed in the law. As of this writing, no penalties or fines have been assessed.

I am not saying that these women should be denied medical care. I am saying that the number of injuries and the cost to taxpayers should be investigated. As we view the neglect of standard medical procedures at abortion clinics, it is not surprising to learn that injuries occur and that these injuries are costly to women and to the State of Mississippi.

The State is the institution empowered by its citizens to act. I hope that elected officials will soon look at Medicaid expenditures to treat women injured by abortion and take the actions necessary to deal with this fiscal and health safety issue.

Editor's note: Mississippi Attorney General Mike Moore can be contacted at P.O. Box 220, Jackson, MS 39205-0220. Telephone: (601) 359-3680. Fax: (601) 359-3796. E-mail: dmorg@ago.state.ms.us. State Health Officer Brian W. Amy, who supervises the Mississippi State Department of Public Health, can be reached at P.O. Box 1700, Jackson, MS 39215-1700. Telephone: (601) 576-7400. Fax: (601) 576-7364. E-mail: info@msdh.state.ms.us. Pat Cartrette can be contacted at 618 Briarwood Drive, Suite D, Jackson, MS 39211. Telephone: (601) 956-8636. E-mail: rtlj@jam.rr.com.



GLAD TO BE HOME — More than 5,000 sailors step off the deck of the USS Harry S. Truman as they reunite with family and loved ones after the aircraft carrier's six-month deployment to the east Mediterranean as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. (BP photo by Morris Abernathy)

Families reunite after long war separation

NORFOLK, Va. (BP) — The skies were dreary gray and the pelting rain came down like waterfalls but for the family and friends of sailors stationed on the USS Harry S. Truman, it was the sunniest and happiest day they'd seen in a while.

There on Pier 14 at the Norfolk Naval Station, Laurie Hawks stood with her two little girls, Katherine, age 5, and Mary, age 1, with 12,000 other people, straining to see the first glimpses of the enormous aircraft carrier come into view. Her husband Gene, a supply officer for the Truman, was one of 5,000 men and women returning from the ship's six-month deployment to the east Mediterranean and the war with Iraq. The day Laurie for which had been praying — homecoming — had finally arrived.

After traveling more than 41,000 miles, flying more than 1,280 combat sorties and striking more than 588 targets, the

men and women of the USS Truman stood in their dress whites at the rails of the great ship, ready to reunite with their families. More than a hundred new dads waited to meet their babies for the first time.

While the reunion of homecoming can bring enormous joy to military families, experts caution that the shift from deployment back to family can be difficult on both the family member coming home and the family who remained behind.

Greg DeMarco, associate pastor of pastoral care and family life at London Bridge Church in Virginia Beach, Va., has counseled hundreds of military couples and says the best way to handle homecoming is by taking it slow.

"You need to take it slow and let the military member talk about what they've experienced," he said. It's important for the spouse to be a good lis-

tener. He also offered a warning: "One of the things the spouse needs to be careful to avoid is to develop the attitude that 'he's been off playing war, now it's his turn to handle the house.'"

"It's only by the grace of God that we get through any of this," said Laurie, who along with her husband, is a member of Pleasant Grove Church in Chesapeake, Va. "For months I've prayed for the transition, that's the hardest part — just for God to give us the grace to take it slow and not get frustrated so quickly with one another."

Truman Command chaplain Doyle Dunn, who is endorsed by the North American Mission Board, said now more than ever Christians should pray for the military.

"Pray for the family relationships that have been strained by the time apart and that there would be healing at every level," Dunn said. "Also, pray that those who made commitments to God while we were at sea would follow through and continue to walk with Christ in faith."

Dunn had the privilege of participating in the first baptism held on board the Truman and said there were several conversions while at sea. He admitted that it is hard to quantify how much of an impact that Christians made

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on board during their time in the east Mediterranean.

"There are many Christians who faithfully witness with their words and their actions with non-believers and backslidden Christians around them," Dunn said. "God never lets His Word return void, so we believe each opportunity makes an impact. We accept the fact that with the frequent rotation of personnel in the military environment, we won't always see the long-term results and may only know the true impact when we get to heaven."

Soaking wet, but extremely happy, the Hawks walk off Pier 14 arm in arm and smiling ear to ear. Gene will only have four days of leave before returning to his normal port duties.

"My Sunday School teacher said it best the other day," said Laurie. "No matter what you're going through, it's wonderful to know that God has allowed it, and wouldn't allow it if we couldn't handle it by His grace."

MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

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Looking back

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board is invited to a called meeting in Jackson to consider a request from Baptist-affiliated William Carey College in Hattiesburg for a \$7.9 million refinancing of its debts.

Mississippian Jerry Clower agrees to host a television version of the popular Country Crossroads radio program for the American Christian Television System (ACTS). The program will be filmed at Six Flags over Texas.

50 YEARS AGO

Earl Kelley, graduate of Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton and Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., accepts the pastorate of First Church, Holly Springs, after seven years as pastor in Greensburg, Ind.

WMU seeking info on NAC attendance

The Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) is attempting to compile an accurate list of churches planning to send Acteens to the National Acteens Convention on July 21-25 in Nashville.

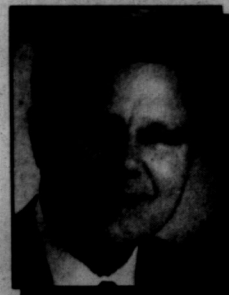
WMU consultant Robin Keels has requested that any NAC participants from Mississippi Baptist churches who will not be traveling with the WMU tour group contact Nancy Mason, WMU ministry assistant, before July 1 at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3316 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 316. E-mail: nmason@mbcb.org.

SELLING DADDY

With Father's Day just around the corner, an event that happened back in March triggered some thoughts about "Daddies." They were somewhat negative thoughts, but maybe we can pull something positive out of them. I had remembered about a lady who went on-line and posted her father for sale on E-Bay. Now, if you are not familiar with E-Bay — it is a world-wide, computer connected auction block and folks sell any and everything you can imagine! But, this was the first time a father was put out on the auction block.

According to the lady who was trying to sell her dad, he was in good shape, nice-looking, but she was simply tired of putting up with him, so she put him up for sale. She was hoping that some nice lady, who could afford him, would come along, make the right bid, and take him off her hands. During the first week, with a world-wide audience, only one bid had been received and they were not revealing how much money was offered. Obviously, dads are not in great demand; or, at least, this one did not seem to be!

When I first read about this, the immediate question that came to my mind was, which one of my daughters had put me on E-Bay? My parental paranoia immediately kicked in and I began to think of all the things that I could have done and should have done for and with my girls and didn't. I thought of all the things that would have been better unsaid and undone, and I wondered if they would really go to the trouble of putting me on the auction block just to get rid of me. I wanted to call one, or both of them, and ask if they were the ones who were responsible for trying to sell their "daddy." I did not call, because, on further reflection, I did not want to encourage



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

them if they had not done it. So, I just kind of sat and stewed in the atmosphere of not knowing.

What is a dad worth anyway? I guess it would be hard to determine and I suppose that, like anything else (horses, dogs, cars, or houses), there is a vast range of what they might be worth. I would imagine that if a survey were taken, or if someone started putting "moms" on E-Bay, we would discover that mothers are thought to be worth a great deal more than daddies. But, as we approach Father's Day, I just wanted to go on record to say to dads everywhere out there, "You are worth a bunch!"

Even though daddies do not do the actual birthing, and although we may not participate in as much of the nurturing, we are still important to the family unit, to the wife and children, to the community, and to the Kingdom of God. Please understand that this is not a self-glorifying, horn-tooting operation. I know that if I were put on the auction block, I would come in somewhere in the bottom 25%; but, even so, somebody has to fill that spot!

Now, how do you go about measuring what a dad is worth? If you want to find out the value of a car you can get out the old Blue Book. If you want to find out how much a TV is worth, check out there under Market Place for values. But, a dad — his value is hard to determine. One of the problems in trying to set a price-tag on him is the fact that his real worth to a child or the entire family usually can't be deter-

mined until some time after he has gone. Now, I recognize that there is an immediate value that can be placed on an experience, an act of love, or a guiding word; but, usually before dad's value takes root, it has to play out over the long haul in what he said, what he cared about, and what he sought to model before his children.

So, dad, while you may not be worth a lot to folks who visit the E-Bay website, let me tell you — you are valuable! You are valuable in the sight of God! You are valuable to your family! And, you are worth a bunch to a lot of the people you come in contact with. This is for you to reflect on more than it is for any of them, so that you can give attention to raising your own value. Remember that what you are is of greater value than what you do. Men are so action-oriented and accomplishment-driven, that we think because we go to work, or put together a bicycle, that we are of value. In truth, just who you are is of greater value than those things that you do.

There was a time in my life when I could bench-press a bunch of weight, run a five-minute mile, and was able to palm a basketball — none of which I can do now! But, does that make me of lesser value to my children and grandchildren? I certainly hope not. If we could realize, as we are driven to excel in our work and feel compelled to put in a 26-hour day, that just what we are (if we are what the Lord wants us to be), is of much greater value than what we do.

All of my life I went to church and listened to the same preacher. My pastor was my dad. I heard most all of his sermons and I can remember a lot of the things he said. Yet, the most vivid, treasured memories I have of him are just being with him at a special time or place when maybe nothing was being said. He was just being who he was — my dad, and I was being his boy.

Another important thing to remember as you evaluate your worth, is that what you do is more valuable than what you say. I have known of dads who could quickly give instructions, bark orders to the kids, and be demanding of their wives. I also know that love is a far better commodity when it is an "affirmation" than when it is just an "exclamation!" Or, to state it in a different and clearer way, love is best understood when it is "seen" and not just "heard."

I was visiting a lady in a hospital one day when a tap came at her door. I walked over, opened the door, and it was the husband of the lady that I was visiting. The man, whom I knew, walked right past me without even an acknowledgment. He walked straight over to his wife, leaned over the bed, and gave her a big kiss. Then, he turned and said, "How are you preacher?" I answered, "I'm fine, but I thought you didn't even see me." He replied, "I saw you, but I wanted to speak to my sweetheart first!" This precious couple had been married almost 70 years when that took place and I thought, "Love is more what you do than just what you say."

A final thought for you to put in your memory bank and raise your value is to remember that what you say is of greater significance than your silence. Letting the folks around you know that you do love them is not only good — it is essential! I have literally met hundreds of men who lived their lives with a hole in their heart that could have been filled by their father if he had simply taken the time to say, "I love you" — but he didn't. There are men, women, and children who press on in life, but they do so with a longing and yearning to hear the man they admire simply tell them that he loves them.

For some of you, it would be one of the hardest things you ever did. But, at the same time, it could be one of the most rewarding moments in your life — to let the significant people around you hear you caringly say, "I love you!" You may have given your kids shelter, food, clothes, and an education, yet missed out on giving them your heart. Take the time, set aside the reluctance, push through the awkwardness, and let the folks around you know that you love them. If you do, you will probably not be put up for auction on E-Bay by your wife or kids!

May the Lord bless you, keep you, and give you a great Father's Day!

LifeWay store offers prayers for soldiers

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP) — It started with one name. Soon, the slips of paper smothered a small bulletin board. Before Jo Minton knew it, her LifeWay Christian Store staff had gathered for prayer the names of hundreds of U.S. soldiers fighting in the war against Iraq.

In March, a mother came into the Montgomery, Ala., store to purchase a copy of the New Testament. When Minton, the store manager, learned the Bible was for the woman's son who was leaving for Iraq the next day, she

requested his name so her staff could pray for him during daily devotions.

"His name was the first name on the board," Minton said. "It's just been remarkable. There are more than 300 names on the board now, and we pray for each person and their families every day."

The LifeWay store staff committed to pray for the soldiers on the board daily until each soldier returned home. Minton attributes Alabama's low casualty rate in the war to the power of prayer, and she said she believes that prayer has saved many lives.

"It was very exciting to see this store looking for ministry opportunities in the midst of war," said Zach Lang, director of



PRAYING FOR SOLDIERS — Some of the employees at the LifeWay Christian Store in Montgomery, Ala., who pray daily for the soldiers listed on the display board at left, are (from left) manager Jo Minton, Essie Williams, Michelle Talley, Barbara McGohon, David Johnson, and Vicki Thomas. (BP photo by Erin Webster)

the Southeastern region for LifeWay Christian Stores. "I couldn't help but think how grateful the families of the soldiers must have been to know that this store's employees would actually take time to collect the names of and pray for their loved ones serving our country."

The staff prays together every morning before unlocking the doors. Large boards full of names stand at the front of the store so anyone can add to the giant prayer list.

"We have to start earlier every day," Minton said. "Sometimes we unlock the doors, and our customers come in and pray with us. We read every name out loud and pray for them."

Some of the parents and family members of people on the prayer board have stopped by the store to thank Minton and her employees for their prayers. "It's nice for them to know that they're not the only ones praying for their sons or daughters," she said.

Lang said the Montgomery store employees exemplify LifeWay's mission to minister to people.

"Ministry is our purpose," he said. "In our stores, it is typically done through providing Bibles, books, music and other materials to individuals and churches. I think this prayer ministry is just another example of how our stores are willing to go the extra mile to minister to their customers. This exemplifies the ministry hearts of our LifeWay employees."

The store's prayer ministry has captured the attention of the community and was featured on a local television news program, but Minton said her staff is just doing its job.

"This store is not just about providing products," she said. "We have a ministry. It's an honor to be able to do this for the people in our community and in our state."

Lang agreed. "Our folks aren't satisfied to just open the doors and sell products each day. They want to make a difference in the lives of their customers."

Sibley: witnessing opportunities up in Holy Land

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Tourism to the Holy Land has fallen to its lowest level in 20 years, with fewer than one million tourists visiting Israel in 2002. This decline is due primarily to the overwhelming publicity surrounding recent violence in the Middle East, Geoffrey Weill, a spokesperson for the Israel Ministry of Tourism, said.

Despite the wave of Mideast violence, however, Jim Sibley, coordinator of Jewish ministries for the interfaith evangelism group of the North American Mission Board, said Southern Baptists should not overestimate the risks associated with travel to the Holy Land. Traveling to the Middle East, he noted, may provide believers with a unique opportunity to share the message of Christ with Israelis.

In 2002, just 862,000 tourists visited Israel, the Jan. 26 edition of *Globes*, a daily Israeli news publication, reported. That number represents a 30% decline from 2001 and a 70% decline from 2000.

Hotel occupancy in Israel recently reached its lowest level since the first Gulf War. For February 2003, tourist overnight stays numbered 176,000, down 80% from February 2000, the *Globes* reported March 26.

Israeli officials do not expect a significant increase for the remainder of 2003, according to the May 15 *Globes*. Minister of Tourism Binyamin Elon predicted that just one million tourists will visit Israel this year, down from 2.7 million in 2000.

Despite the barrage of warnings about travel to the Middle East, however, the chance of encountering violence is far less than the level of fear, Sibley said.

"Without wanting to minimize the risk for any danger, I think that the odds [of encountering violence] are low, probably lower than the chances that a person could be seriously injured riding into work," Sibley said.

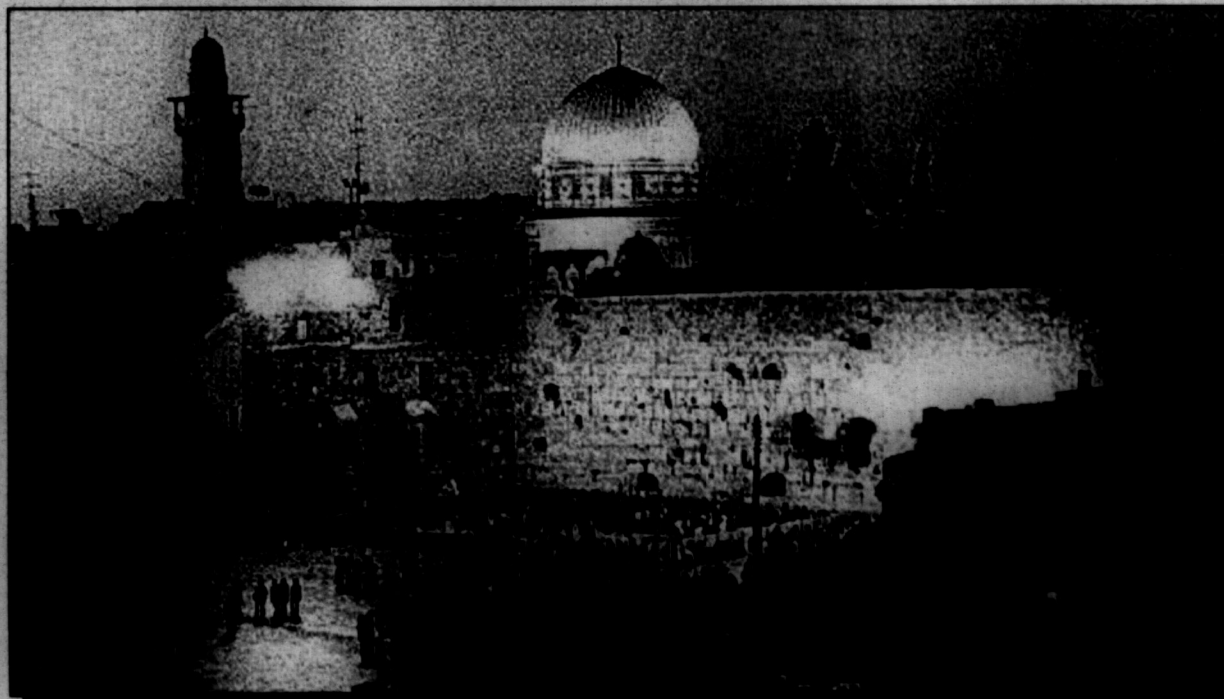
Still, Sibley admits that some risk is associated with travel to the Holy Land. They are optimistic that the current Mideast peace proposal, the "road map" to peace, will usher in a period of decreased violence and risk to travelers.

The "road map," a peace plan sponsored by the United States, European Union, United Nations and Russia, calls for a Palestinian state with temporary borders this year and a permanent state in 2005. It requires the immediate cessation of violence on both sides and Israeli withdrawal to the borders in place before Israel gained new territories in the 1967 war.

During the present cycle of turmoil, however, for those willing to go, travel in Israel may present an opportunity to share the Gospel with Israelis, Sibley said.

Traveling to a country in turmoil is a tremendous expression of support, he said, and it may prompt Israelis to pay close attention to anything American tourists have to say.

"I think it would provide an entree for the Gospel," Sibley said. "There would be a lot of interest in any tourists who come to Israel at this particular time. Especially if those tourists are gentle Christians from the United States, I think it would provide an entree for Southern Baptists to share the Good News of the Messiah with the Jewish people they might meet."



TOURISM TROUBLES — Jerusalem and its famed Western Wall are among the Holy Land sites for which tourism dropped to fewer than one million people last year. At least one Southern Baptist leader sees the current Israeli tourism woes as an opening to share the Gospel. (BP photo courtesy of the www.israel-wat.com website)



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

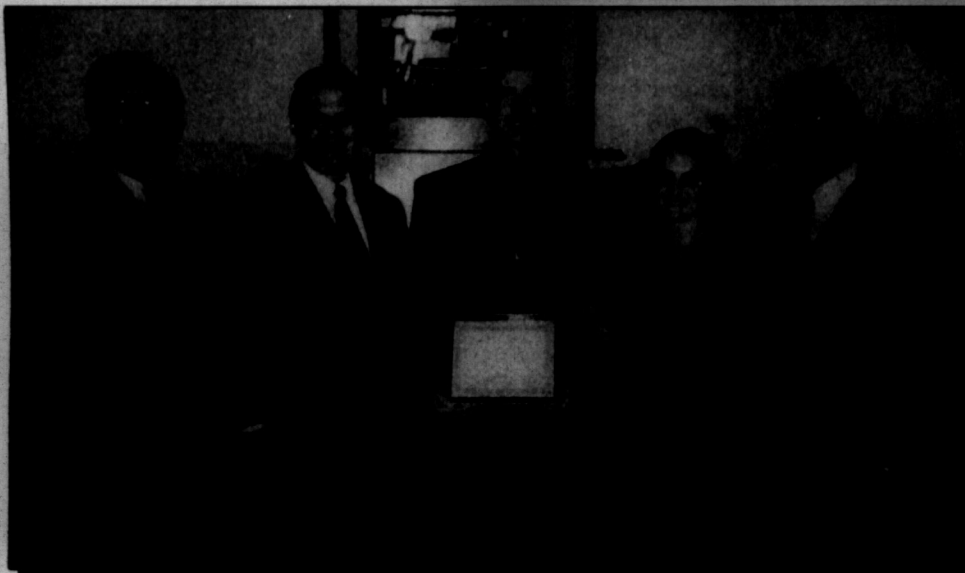
Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. *(I have sinned.)*
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. *(I repent.)*
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. *(I believe in Jesus.)*
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him. *(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)*

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

NAMS IN THE NEWS



Smith, Herrin, Jeff & Bridget Davis, and Smith, pastor

accepted his first pastorate at Bethel Church, Summit. Pictured (from left) are Talmadge Smith, Archie Herrin, Davis and his wife Bridget, and Stephen Smith, pastor at Providence Church.

J. D. Johnson recently resigned from the pastorate at Barnes Crossing Church, Tupelo. He can be reached for supply and interim at (662) 840-2714.

Pine Grove Church, Picayune, ordained David Haselmaier as a deacon on May 4. Pictured (from left) are

Reggie Bridges, pastor, Haselmaier, and his wife Lesa.

Mt. Manna Church, Coldwater, licensed Kevin Doyle to the ministry on May 4. Doyle is available for pulpit supply and revivals, and can be reached at (662) 233-4524.



Doyle and Eldridge

OBITUARIES

Billy B. Guest Sr., Magee, passed away on June 1. Funeral services were held June 3 at Corinth Church, Magee.

Guest pastored Corinth Church along with several other churches in the state.

Survivors include his wife, Della Sherwood Guest; son, Anthony Guest; daughter, Deborah Woods; sisters, Jimmie Runnels, Virgie Grissom, and Martha Smith; eight grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

Sibyl Brame (Townsend) Warren, Arlington, Va., formerly of Yazoo City and Blue Mountain, died May 26.

Warren served as Dean of Students at Blue Mountain College. She authored articles in Southern Baptist publications along with a book. Warren later became the Dean of Women at New Orleans Seminary.

Survivors include her daughter, Grace Merchant; sons, Carl Townsend and Tim Townsend; stepchildren, Carl Warren, Gene Warren, and Virginia Poe; and sisters Marcie Brigham and Frances Spain.



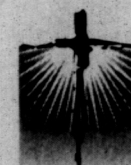
Greg Lusk and Ken Kirk, pastor



Bridges, pastor; David & Lesa Haselmaier



MISSISSIPPI
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FOR THE
GLORY
OF GOD



JUST FOR THE RECORD

French Camp Church, French Camp, invites preschoolers-6th graders to VBS. It will be held from 9 a.m.-noon June 23-27. For more information, call (662) 547-6348.

Holly Church, Corinth, will hold VBS on June 23-27 at 6 p.m.

Escatawpa Church, Escatawpa, will hold VBS on June 23-28 from 6-8:30 p.m.

Barnes Crossing Church, Saltillo, will hold VBS on June 16-20 from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Highpointe-Palestine Church, Raymond, will hold a celebration and dedication service on June 21 beginning at 10 a.m. A meal will follow the service along with singing and music in the afternoon. The Palestine Church building burned three years ago, but churches from all over the state, along with those in Louisiana and Georgia, sent teams to construct a new building and gave financial help so that the building is debt free.

Grace United Church, Newton, broke ground on May 18 to launch the construction of the first unit of their proposed physical plant. Constituted and chartered a year ago, the congregation has met and is meeting presently in privately owned property. Pictured (from left, front) are Harry Eason, Matt Addy, Jerry Johnson, (back) J. R.



Grace United Church Ground Breaking, Newton

Addy, Grady Chaney, Robbie Brown, James Holt, Tom Scarborough, Terry Todd, and Roger Brown.

The Joy Singers of First Church, Charleston, presented Sermon on the Mound, a children's musical set around a baseball theme, on May 18. Janine Vincent directed the musical. Mark Vincent is pastor.

First Church, Collinsville, held an Awana Awards Ceremony on May 21. Milton Mowdy is the Awana Commander for the group. Hal J. Bates is pastor.

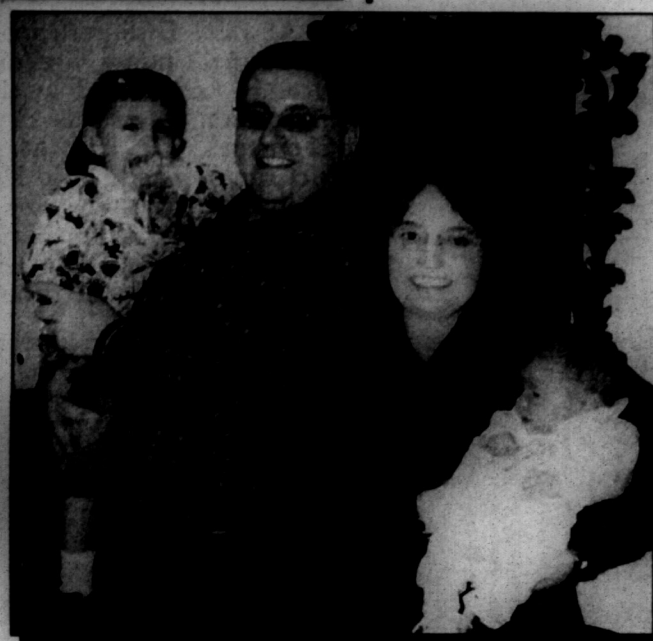
Laurel Hill Church, Carthage, recently met and exceeded their Annie Armstrong Easter offering goal of \$500 by collecting \$800.

The Women's Ministry, Sisters In Service, of Indian Springs Church, Laurel, recently

gave a baby shower for the Crisis Pregnancy Center. Claudia Myers is director of the center. Mike West is pastor.

Ridgeway Church, Vicksburg, recently acquired their first steeple with donated money. Workers from Warren County Association along with the Ridgeway workers installed the steeple. Clyde Pullen is pastor.

Holly Church, Corinth, held a Baby Dedication service on March 23. Pictured (from left) are Chuck Hodum with Nathan, and his wife Karen with Evan. Tony Morrow is pastor.



The Hodum Family



Awana Awards of First Church, Collinsville



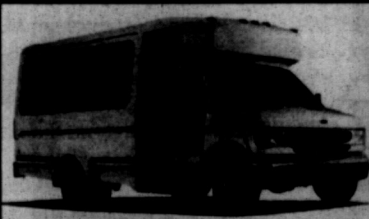
Joy Singers of First Church, Charleston



Sisters in Service of Indian Springs Church, Laurel

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SERIOUS CONCERNS

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JUST FOR THE RECORD

All Bible Drill participants of Immanuel Church, Greenwood, recently participated in church, association, and state drills in Cleveland. Marleigh McCrimmon and David Herbert received trophies for three years state participants. Eric Sims participated as a state youth finalist in Jackson. Pictured (from left,



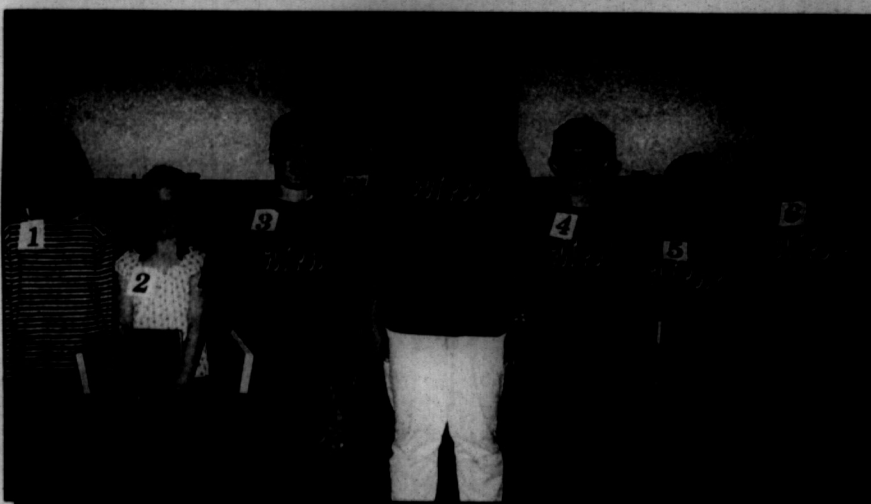
Mission Friends of Indian Springs Church, Laurel



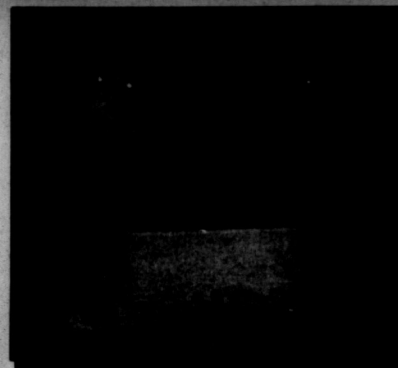
Bible Drill Participants of Immanuel Church, Greenwood



Youth Bible Drill Participants of Sebastopol Church, Sebastopol



Children Bible Drill Participants of Sebastopol Church, Sebastopol



Peck and Foster

front) are Stephenie McCrimmon, Courtney Irvin, Rachael Ellis, Marleigh McCrimmon, (back) Sims, Herbert, and Bea Ellis, leader. Danny Irvin is pastor.

Mission friends, GAs, and RAs of Indian Springs Church, Laurel, recently participated in the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. The Mission Friends gave \$29.91, the GAs gave \$589.19, and the RAs gave \$344.51. Mike West is pastor.

The Mississippi Baptist Association recently presented Carol Peck with a plaque for 25 years of ministry as Association Bible Drill Director. Pictured (from left) are Peck and Alton Foster.

Alton Foster presented a check from the Mississippi Baptist Association to Kenny Heath, Director of Missions, Western Baptist Association, Maryland, for Faith scholarships. Pictured (from left) are Joe Denicola, Foster, and Heath.

Bible Drills were recently held at Sebastopol Church, Sebastopol. Pictured are the Children Bible Drillers (from left) Erin Thornton and Shannon Jenkins, Springfield Church; Kyle Havard, Lynn Cox, director, Tyler Gilmore, Rod Varner, Colton Pope, and the Youth Bible Drillers Lacey



GAs of Indian Springs Church, Laurel



RAs of Indian Springs Church, Laurel



Denicola, Foster, and Heath

Gilmore, Amanda Bankson, Brooke Dove, Shay Pope, and Emily Trash, High Hill Church; Cindy Dove, director.

www.mbb.org

LEESVILLE - FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH: Full-time youth and recreation minister. Send resumes with photo to: Youth Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church of Leesville, P.O. Box 1568, 1400 Nolan Trace, Leesville, LA 71446; or email fbcleesville@wnonline.net.

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BYNE MEMORIAL BAPTIST CHURCH IN Albany, Georgia, is now actively seeking a senior pastor. Interested pastors are asked to contact the chairman of the pastor search

committee at the following address: Donald Lanier, 1318 Gail Avenue, Albany, GA 31707. Information about the church can be viewed at www.byne.org.

PARADISE LANES: MISSISSIPPI'S only smoke and alcohol free bowling center. Call about lock-in, group rates, fund raisers, and leagues. Located at 820 Cooper Road, Jackson, MS. Call (601) 372-7700.

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, BELLS, TENN., is searching for a full-time minister of youth and children. Send resumes to First Baptist Church, c/o youth and children's minister search committee, P.O. Box 206, Bells, TN 38606. Any questions call (731) 784-3807.

NAMES IN THE NEWS

Macedonia Church, Louisville, recognized **Arnold Reed** for his 51 years as a deacon by honoring him with the title of Deacon Emeritus on May 25. Pictured (from left) are Reed's wife Ruth, Reed, and Jack Manor, pastor.



Barnes and Erwin

Topisaw Church, Bogie Chitto, ordained **Lance Thompson** to the ministry on March 16. Thompson, who attends New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, was called to pastor at Saul's Valley

Church, Monticello. Pictured (from left) are Talmadge Smith, Archie Herrin, Thompson, David Moree, pastor of Topisaw Church, and Bendon Ginn, pastor of Easthaven Church, Brookhaven.

Gloria Barnes celebrated her tenth anniversary as Minister of Music at Macedonia Church, Mendenhall, on May 18. Pictured (from left) are Gloria Barnes and Gene Erwin, pastor.



Smith, Herrin, Thompson, Moree, and Ginn



Ruth & Arnold Reed and Jack Manor, pastor

NOT IN DARK

Editor:

I am writing in regard to your May 29 editorial (A little more sunshine, please). There are two issues I would like to address from your editorial.

First, how can you say Southern Baptists have been in the dark about the issue of our International Mission Board missionaries being required to sign the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message? Evidently, you underestimate the number of people who read your paper. Almost every month since Jerry Rankin sent his first letter to our missionaries, there has been something written in The Baptist Record about this issue. I have a hard time believing that anyone who cared about this would not have had the opportunity to be informed about what was happening.

Secondly, I will be among those who would accuse some of our missionaries of being theologically in error. Furthermore, some of the ones I would accuse refused to sign and accepted positions of service with organizations in opposition to the Southern Baptist Convention. Please understand that I am talking about individuals I know personally, because I have served with them on the mission field through short-term mission trips. However, I am not including their names in this letter for the protection of all involved.

I appreciate you taking time to read this letter and hope you will consider all the facts in any future article you publish on this subject.

Desi Ginn
Southaven

ANSWER DESERVED

Editor:

Thanks for your editorial on May 29 (A little more sunshine, please). The questions you asked were relevant and fair, and deserve an answer.

The forced signing of the revised Baptist Faith and Message by our Southern Baptist international missionaries will prove to be an exercise in futility. In my opinion, any Southern Baptist missionary

whose Christian ethics are such that he would teach or preach doctrine contrary to Baptist beliefs and doctrine will have no qualms whatsoever about signing the affirmation statement and continue doing as usual.

On the other hand, these unknown and unnamed people will still make charges and accusations as long as they can remain anonymous, regardless of the affirmation.

Jerry Rankin created a tempest in a teapot, and the only result is 77 missionaries have left the international mission field. The work that Jesus commanded us to do has been hurt, not helped.

Haskel Stringer
Bay Springs

QUESTIONS ALLOWED?

Editor:

It may just be me, but it seems that there is a difference in asking people to sign a statement of belief before they begin their service and then another one with subtle but significant changes after they have shown their faithfulness and commitment to what they had signed earlier.

I write this with some hesitancy. Are we allowed to question our leaders?

Gary Anglin
Pascagoula

PRAY FOR MISSIONARIES

Editor:

Thank you for your editorial on May 29 (A little more sunshine, please). The second paragraph seems to sum up the beliefs of those who refused to sign. Are we as Southern Baptists moving toward a denomination that lives by man-made creeds?

The act has been done and we will probably never know the names or the fields of their service. Therefore, we have an even greater cause to pray for them, believing that God and God alone is aware of their dedication to His service. As His plan unfolds for each of the 77 men and women, may they marvel at His goodness as He handpicks places for them to magnify His name.

Elizabeth J. Taylor
Rosedale

Conference announced

Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania will be the setting for a regional Mission/Ministry Conference on September 12-13, co sponsored by Mississippi Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and the Men's Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. This is a leadership development conference for people in WMU, Men's Ministry, and community ministry. Bus transportation will be provided, departing on September 11 and returning September 14. Cost of the trip depends on the number of people in the hotel room. Double occupancy is \$355 per person. Triple occupancy is \$343 per person. Quad occupancy is \$332 per person. The cost includes bus transportation, two nights lodging on the road, and conference housing and meals. On the return trip, the group will stay over in the Gatlinburg. Participants may choose to shop, take in a show, or just relax. To register for this trip see forms in HouseTops. Registration forms may also be downloaded from www.mbc.org. For more information, contact Mississippi WMU at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3317 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 317. E-mail: lschuler@mbcb.org.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH COLUMBUS, Miss., is currently accepting resumes for the position of Interim Director of preschool and children's ministries. Please mail resumes to P.O. Box 829, Columbus, MS 39703, attn: Robyn Gaydon.

SLAYDEN BAPTIST CHURCH, Slayden, Miss., (Marshall Association) is seeking an interim music/worship leader. Please contact the church office at (662) 252-4559.

BETHESDA BAPTIST CHURCH, TERRY, Miss., is currently seeking a pianist to play in all services and rehearsals. For more information, please call (601) 939-1836 or fax inquiries to (601) 939-2924.

FRANKLIN BAPTIST CHURCH, FLORA, Miss. is seeking a bivocational youth minister and a music minister. Send resume with photo to: search committee, attn: Jo Willett, 2066 Cox Ferry Road, Flora, MS 39071.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, PEARL, MISS., is currently seeking to fill a full-time Administrative Assistant position, to fulfill the administrative needs of the church

membership and staff. Computer literate and strong organizational skills essential. Knowledge of Shelby Systems a plus, but not required. Please send resume to: FBC Pearl, Attn: personnel, 405 N. Bierdman Road, Pearl, MS 39208.

NEW SALEM BAPTIST CHURCH, Columbus, Miss., is seeking a bivocational or part-time youth minister. Send resume to: New Salem Baptist Church, 7086 Wolf Road, Columbus, MS 39705. For more information email: newsalembaptist@msn.com or call (662) 356-4940.

PART-TIME CHILDREN'S DIRECTOR needed at First Baptist Church of Byram. Call (601) 372-3156.

WE, AT PINE GROVE, ARE LOOKING for a part-time youth minister, who is around the age of 20-30, married, male. We will consider a college student. We can offer around \$75 per week. Send resume to: Andy Boles, 201 N. Jadek Drive, NE, Magee, MS 39111, phone: (601) 849-4735.

Seminaries reach out to women in ministry

First of a two-part series

Clarification

A mass mailing that asks Mississippi Baptist churches to collect a Father's Day offering on behalf of a proposed Christian facility in Madison County for mentally-challenged adults has resulted in a number of calls to the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB).

The offering request is contained in April 11 and May 23 letters from Son Valley, a ministry of Baptist Homes, Inc. The May 23 letter, signed by Kay Foshee, president of Baptist Homes, Inc., contained offering envelopes, posters, and brochures.

Son Valley and Baptist Homes, Inc., are not affiliated with the Mississippi Baptist Convention. Messengers from local Baptist churches to the 2002 annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention approved a resolution that recognized the ministry of Baptist Homes, Inc., and the need for Christian care for the mentally-challenged, but no offering has been authorized by convention messengers or the convention board.

To view the full text of the 2002 resolution, visit www.mbc.org. For more information, contact Barri A. Shirley, MBCB Associate Executive Director for Resource Services, at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3240 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 240. E-mail: bshirley@mbcb.org.

IRVING, Texas (BP) — For women excluded from the senior pastorate by the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message (BFM), why spend time and energy training for ministry in the local church at a Southern Baptist seminary? This question is being addressed by all six seminaries supported by the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program.

The BFM's article on the church gave critics a chance to contend that Southern Baptists believe women do not play an important role in the church, said Heather King, one of two females who served on the study committee to revise the historic confessional statement.

"In authoring the statement on women serving in the local church, the committee fully realized that both Scripture and the testimony of Jesus designates women as integral ministry initiators and coworkers," said King, women's program coordinator at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. "That is why it is so important for women to be present in seminary classrooms, so they can be equipped for ministry."

Critics of the confessional statement expected female attendance in Southern Baptist seminaries to drop in the post-convention meeting media blitz that labeled the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) as misogynist. However, statistics from all six schools indicate female enrollment has remained the same or is growing. For example, in 1991 Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., reported 85 female students on its main campus. In 2002, the number jumped to 506, a 495% increase.

The irony is not lost on Terri Stovall, women's program director for Southwestern as female enrollment at the Fort Worth, Texas, campus has remained steady, up from 670 females enrolled last spring.

"I have seen local churches opening the doors to women for all types of ministry opportunities. The BFM 2000 affirms and empowers women to discover the gifts, talents and passion that God has given them and then seek out where best to use those gifts in the local church," said Stovall, who also serves as assistant professor of adult education and aging in Southwestern's school of educational ministries. "I know of women and have friends who serve as church administrators, worship music leaders, educational ministers, student ministers, children and preschool ministers and yes ... even women's ministers."

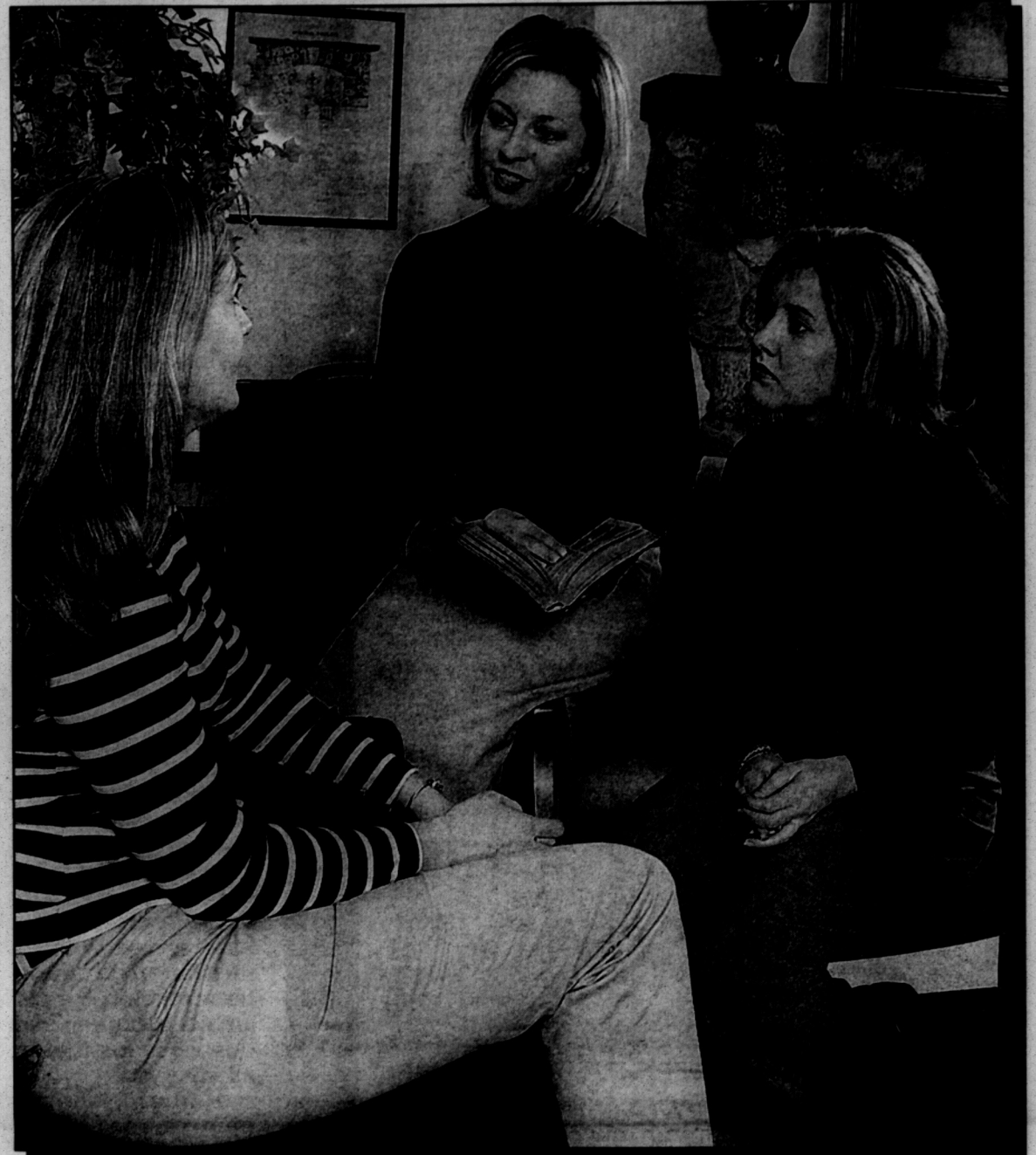
SOUTHWESTERN SEMINARY

In the fall of 2002, 692 women were enrolled in classes on Southwestern's main campus, 178 of whom were pursuing the master of arts in Christian education degree. This degree, which offers a concentration in women's ministry, consists of 70 hours and has been in place at the seminary since 2000. The degree includes 14 hours of seminary core classes, 12 hours of theology classes, and 32 hours of courses within the school of educational ministries.

The concentration includes courses such as women's issues, adult development psychology, counseling with Scripture, and speech and oral interpretation.

Stovall, who helped design the curriculum, stated that the degree equips women to fulfill "a myriad of leadership roles" as a lay leader, church staff member, denominational employee, or missionary.

"My vision is that the women's ministry program at Southwestern equips women to make a difference for the Kingdom of God in whatever context they are placed," Stovall said. "My dream is to begin to take this training to other states and even other countries. A number of my students are international women who want to impact the fami-



ENCOURAGING WOMEN — Heather King (center) seeks to equip women students at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., for ministry opportunities through her staff position as director of women's programs. The women students in the photo are unidentified. (BP photo by David Merrifield)

lies from their home country and often the best way to do that is woman to woman."

The seminary also offers a certificate program to train women currently ministering in the local church but unable to attend classes fulltime. Southwestern also seeks to equip the wives of students to be partners in ministry with their husbands. This year, the Texas seminary established a leadership certificate in women's ministry with new courses being added each year in the area of women's ministry, teaching and counseling for women.

SOUTHERN SEMINARY

Southern Seminary also is creating new programs for women. In 2002, the seminary hired King as its first full-time women's program director.

"The growing trend is toward large churches hiring both part-time and fulltime women's directors. Even more important, the next five to seven years will be pivotal in Southern Baptist life as many state convention women's directors are nearing retirement," King said. "As women answer God's call to serve and seek out specific programs to equip them for ministry, the pool of seminary-educated women grows. This not only benefits the local church, but the denomination as a whole."

King also is working to implement 15 hours of academic courses to prepare women for ministry in the local church and church agencies. The women's ministry courses are a part of the master of arts in Christian education degree or the master of divinity degree, allowing full-time students to receive "specialized preparation for woman-to-woman

ministry." Theology, communication and leadership skills, missions and evangelism, and the practical application of ministry skills are all emphasized in the program.

Another new development on the seminary's collegiate level is the introduction of a Women's Ministry Institute that will equip women unable to enroll as fulltime students. Because courses will be held in three- to five-day workshops, King said the institute will benefit women who are currently ministering in their churches but want supplemental training. In 2001-02, women outnumbered male students enrolled in Boyce College, 51-49%.

Additionally, the Seminary Wives Institute (SWI) at Southern continues to strengthen its ministry to the wives of seminary students. SWI is designed to give ministers' wives biblically based and practically applied teaching, King said, adding that this ministry is the "heartbeat" of Mary Mohler, the wife of Al Mohler, Southern president. Faculty wives are utilized to teach and mentor women to serve alongside their husbands.

In addition to Souther's coursework for women, the seminary also employs the use of professors known in the evangelical world for work in the area of biblical manhood and womanhood, such as Thomas Schreiner, professor of New Testament and author of the book, *Two Views on Women in Ministry*.

"For a woman to sit under professors of this caliber and be challenged to think systematically and thoroughly concerning all issues of womanhood is transformational to her life and ministry," King said.

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Ministering to Needs

Romans 12:4-8; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11

By Karen Hollowell

If someone sent you a gift for your birthday, how long would you let it lie unopened? Wouldn't natural curiosity drive you to remove the wrapping and have the contents revealed? As believers, we were given spiritual gifts by God to be used in ministering to others. Many of us still do not know what special gift we have been given by God through His wonderful grace.

In Romans 12:4-8, we are given the wonderful analogy by Paul about our gifts and our bodies. We are equipped with different gifts, but there are not any that are more important than others. Just as the individual parts are crucial to the working of our whole body, each person's gift(s) are neces-

sary to the whole body of Christ. There are several gifts listed here as well as in Ephesians 4:11-16. Among them

are teaching, serving, encouraging, giving, leading, showing mercy, and ministering. These are by no means all the gifts. The great thing about them is that they are all equally important, and lovingly supplied by our Creator. The Greek word for gift is "charisma" which is derived from "charis", meaning "grace". In other words, these gifts are totally undeserved. God, on the most special occasion of our acceptance of Jesus Christ as the resurrected Lord, bestows upon us spiritual gifts because of His great love for us!

Because they were given in love, this is the way they should be used. 1 Peter 4:8 says

Hollowell

that we need to love each other deeply because love covers a multitude of sins. If we exercise our gifts in love, then others see the grace of God. This is what God intends. Gifts exercised joylessly will not show an unbelieving world the true nature of God.

How do we know what our gift is? Sometimes people who have been Christians for years will tell you that they don't know what God wants them to do. This is often because we associate a spiritual gift with a job in the church. This frightens many people who may not want a responsibility in that regard. Church duties are very important, but a job in itself is not a spiritual gift. Intimate prayer and study of the Scriptures can help us understand what God has given us individually for the edification of all. Some are God-placed into positions of leadership, but this is to help organize and equip everyone in the carrying-out of

their gifts. Not all gifts were given to everyone. This diversity of gifts should unify and not divide the church. We are to come together and use what we have been given so that all may benefit, no matter how great or small that gift is. In fact, spiritual gifts should not even be discussed in terms of size — this is worldly thinking. This can lead to comparison and competition that hinders the overall ministry.

Sometimes we get the idea that spiritual gifts may be given to everyone but only the leaders of the church have the responsibility of the ministry of the church. It is true that God did ordain positions of leadership within the church, but everyone in the church has the responsibility of ministering to the needs of others. We are to work together so "that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature." We have the great responsibility of helping our brothers and sisters in Christ to grow in the faith. As mature

Christians, we then will not be deceived by false teachings, but will be totally focused on Christ. Also, our gifts are not to be a source of personal pride; instead we should be humbled in the knowledge that God has chosen us to have an important part in the increase of the Kingdom.

This brings us to the purpose of spiritual gifts — serving others and glorifying God. First Peter 4:10-11 tells us that "each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace," with the result being that "...in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ." I recently read a challenge for Christians relating to spiritual gifts which said "You are a minister — serve! You are called — answer! You are empowered — be strong! You are loved — be secure! You are led — be confident! You are protected — be courageous! You are a steward — be faithful! You are gifted — use your gift!"

Hollowell is member of Crosby Church, Crosby.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Be Saved by Faith

Galatians 3:1-14

By Kiley Young

Americans were appalled when the news flash came from the war in Iraq that a U.S. Army sergeant had betrayed his fellow soldiers by tossing grenades into tents of commanding officers, killing some and seriously injuring others. How could he possibly do such a thing? This goes against everything he was taught as an American soldier.

Paul had similar astonishment concerning the believers in the churches of Galatia. "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth...?"

John MacArthur states it this way: "Few things are more tragic or disappointing than a Christian who deserts the purity of the Gospel for a false form of Christianity that presumes to improve on the

finished work of Christ."

Paul was determined to remind these believers about the truth he first shared with them.

He asks them several questions to determine exactly where they were in their spiritual understanding.

I. How did you receive the Holy Spirit? (vv. 1-5)

Paul simply asks the question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?" He reminds them exactly what had taken place that allowed them to experience the saving grace of Jesus Christ. It begins with the conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11). When the sinner believes in Christ he is born of the Spirit (John 3:1-8). The believer is sealed by the Spirit as a guarantee of the future with Christ.

Young

Holy Spirit.

II. Do you remember Abraham? (vv. 6-9)

Paul brings to mind their spiritual father, Abraham. How did he get right with God? He "...believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." (v.6)

The Jews were very proud of their relationship with Abraham, but they counted their physical descent as a guarantee of their spiritual relationship. This says Paul has no bearing on their relationship with God. He states, "only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham." (v.7) This makes eternal difference. There is nothing to be added to faith in Christ. Many still trust their family relationship, their church

membership, and even their "good works" to guarantee them a place in heaven. Paul reminds us in Eph. 2:8 "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

III. Just rely on Jesus (vv. 10-14)

Again Paul points out the absurdity of putting one's self back under the law. One is not rewarded for keeping all the law, but one is condemned for breaking even one point of the law. For example, if you keep all the traffic laws in your town for ten years, you are not rewarded with a ten year certificate for excellence in driving. But, if you drive 45 mph in a 30 mph zone and an observant traffic officer sees you, then you will be invited to make a contribution to your local government for your traffic violation. It matters not who you are or how good your record has been. Your righteousness can not and will not cover your sin.

Paul states, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us." Christ has paid our fine.

He has made us to have no sin before our Heavenly Father. He "justified" us. He made us appear "just as if we had not sinned." He took our curse upon Himself.

God made it possible for us, Gentiles, to have all of the blessings of Abraham, a Jew. This was not made possible through the physical blood line of Abraham. It was through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. It is received by faith through the saving grace of our loving Heavenly Father. Why would anyone want to live under the burden of legalism when you can have the joy of grace? It gives liberty, not license.

Man takes pride in his accomplishments: "Look what I have done." This was true in the churches in Galatia. Spiritual pride was superceding justifying faith in their minds. The same is often true today. God says there is one Way, and His name is Jesus. Paul says it over and over, "The just shall live by faith." That is faith in what Christ has done, not what man can do.

Young is the director of the Sunday School Dept. at the MBCB in Jackson.

Bibliocipher

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CTF ISNCXS ES CVS
XHTX, BHF KCYK XSTY
WHVYK YKS XMDVDY
HW KDX XHT DTYH
EHAV KSCVYX, NVEDTB,
CIIC WCYKSV.

BCUCYDCTX WHAV: XDR

Clue: $R = X$

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Hebrews 4:1

FORERUNNER CHURCH — Savannah, Ga., was the site of the first African American Baptist church in America. The Southern Baptist Convention's African American heritage is the focus of a June 14 seminar in Phoenix. (Photo courtesy of the SBC Historical Library and Archives)



Video selected for distribution by NAMB

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — Good presentations of the Gospel on video and film are not hard to find, but the North American Mission Board (NAMB) last year was looking for something more. They wanted the rest of the story, told in a way that would appeal to postmodern culture.

They discovered *The Hope*, an independently produced video project that is now destined to become a flagship tool for Southern Baptist evangelism and church-planting efforts — just as the Jesus film of a previous generation introduced the Gospel to millions.

Using footage from some of Hollywood's finest biblical epics and other sources as a visual backdrop, three contemporary on-screen narrators, or "storytellers," guide viewers through the "scarlet thread" of Christian truth throughout Scripture.

Under terms of a partnership with the nonprofit Mars Hill Productions, NAMB is distributing *The Hope* to North American audiences and helping develop future versions for languages other than English and varied cultural groups.

John Yarbrough, NAMB's vice president for evangelism, said NAMB had been considering producing its own evangelistic video project last year. Then he saw *The Hope*. "I watched it from beginning to end, and just basically wept as I realized this was exactly what we were looking for," he said.

While praising the Jesus film for its effectiveness around the world since it was produced more than 20 years ago, Yarbrough said a postmodern culture often needs more background in considering whether to believe.

"It begins with Jesus and sin," he said of the Jesus film. "In the culture that we're living in, that's not always going to work. People are asking questions that go beyond that, like 'Why am I here? Is there any meaning to life? What is its purpose? Is there anything beyond us? And if there is, how can I know that He has a meaning and plan for my life?'"

Mars Hill Productions, based in Missouri City, Texas, began in 1977 as a video division of Youth for Christ in Houston. It became an independent ministry in 1988.

Fred Carpenter, president of Mars Hill, said his initial goal for *The Hope* was to develop an evangelistic tool that could be used globally, "something that could be adapted for every tongue, tribe or nation." His first script was "sort of a Four-

Spiritual-Laws; Roman-Road basic American approach to sharing the Gospel," he said.

When he submitted the script to leaders around the world, several said it wasn't likely to work in their contexts.

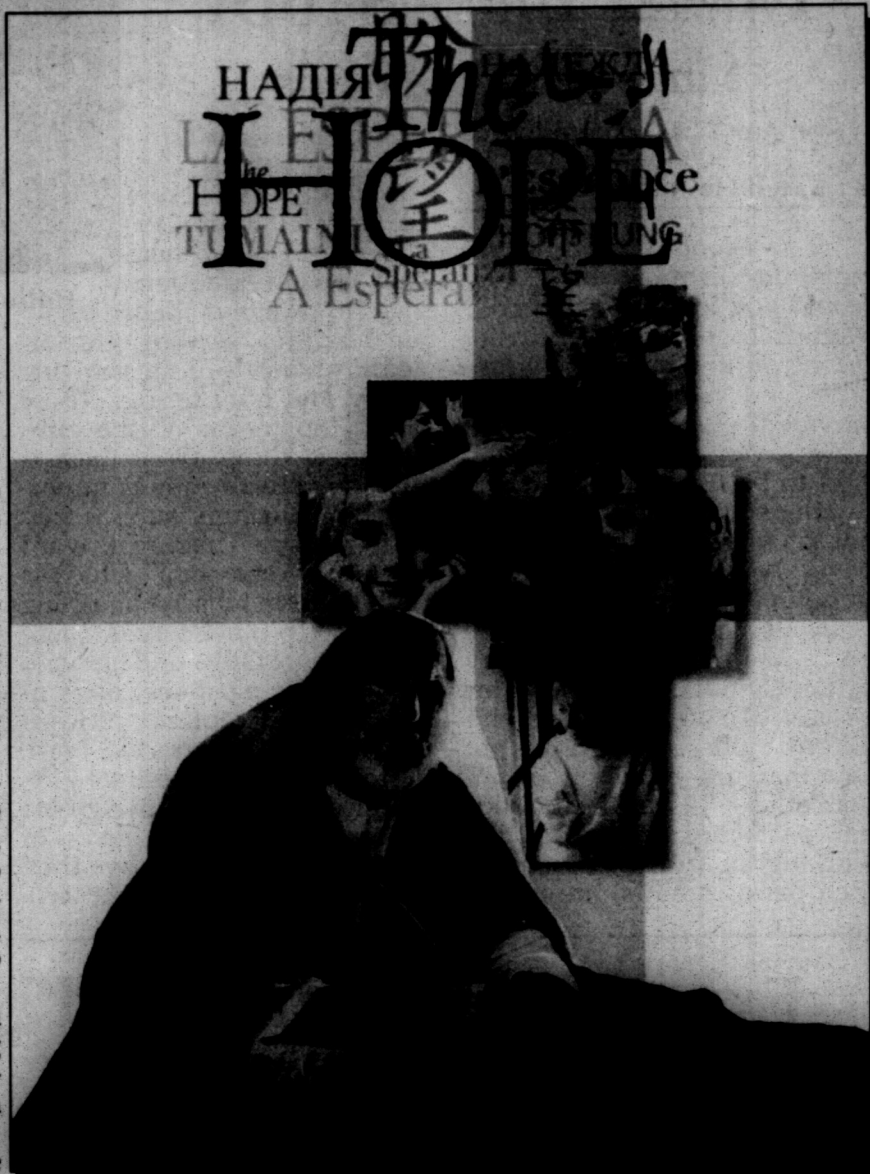
"The cultures they are dealing with lack the underpinnings of Judeo-Christian culture," Carpenter said. "They have no background to understand the concepts of a holy creator God, or sin, or judgment. Why do I need a Savior if I don't understand there is anything such as sin?"

Mars Hill subsequently rewrote the entire project, Carpenter said, to include a full explanation of the Gospel "from Creation to Christ."

The production begins by posing some of the hard questions every human being must face.

"Throughout time people have considered the world in which we live, the complexity and beauty of nature, the mystery of life and death, the depth of human joy and pain," the narrator says. "And they have wondered, how did it all come to be?"

The Hope then explains how the Bible answers those questions. It provides a solid foundation in Genesis, with three of the 12 chapters on the creation through man's fall in the Garden of Eden. Another four chapters cover Noah's flood, Abraham and his descendants, the Exodus from Egypt, the giving of the law, and the promised Messiah. It then skips forward to the fulfillment of that promise in Christ, His death and resurrection, and the rise of the early church and Christianity through history.



The production concludes with an invitation to respond to the Gospel. NAMB's version also refers viewers to the Evangelism Response Center, a network of volunteer telephone encouragers who can guide individuals in prayer for salvation and arrange for follow-up by a local Southern Baptist church.

The prominent use of "storytellers" prominently in the foreground further provides the project one of its most exciting possibilities, Yarbrough said. In future versions to be developed by Mars Hill and NAMB, alternate "storytellers" of varied cultures can be filmed and layered over the base video.

An informational website for *The Hope*, which will include two video clips, will be active June 16 at www.namb.net/thehope.

First African American history conference slated

PHOENIX (BP) — Two years in the planning, the inaugural seminar on the Southern Baptist

Convention (SBC) African American history is slated for June 14, at Bethesda Community Church in Phoenix.

The five-hour seminar dovetails with the annual meeting of the African American Fellowship of the Southern Baptist Convention on June 15-16, and the SBC's annual meeting June 17-18, both in Phoenix. On the seminar's agenda: several 45-minute presentations plus a dinner. Presentations include:

- Why African American Southern

- Baptist history matters, by Kevin Smith, a Ph.D. student at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and one of the program's co-chairs.

- Fifty Years of Progress in the African American Southern Baptist Community, presented by Smith.

- The Past, Present and Future of Greater Friendship Baptist Church, the First Black Southern Baptist Church in the 21st Century, presented by the Alaska church's pastor, Leon May.

- History of the African American Fellowship of the Southern Baptist Convention, presented by George McCalep, the fellowship's current president and pastor of Greenforest Church in Decatur, Ga.

- History of the Black Southern Baptist Denominational Servants

Network, presented by Cotton, who is the Dallas/Fort Worth regional consultant in the Baptist General Convention of Texas' church starting division.

- Achieving Leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention, by E.W. McCall Sr., second vice president of the SBC and pastor of St. Stephen Missionary Baptist Church in La Puente, Calif.

- African American Baptist History: Sources for Research, by Bill Sumners, director of the SBC Historical Library and Archives in Nashville.

The annual meeting of the Black Southern Baptist Denominational Servants Network is set for 2:30 p.m. on June 15, at Bethesda Community in Phoenix, to be concluded with an awards dinner. Cost for the dinner will be \$15.